

Thoughts on ‘one World, one Net, one Vision’

Joint Symposium on the Internet Governance Forum 2019 of the United Nations

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That the Internet is more than a global infrastructure is old news. But the changes and challenges to our global understanding of territorial borders, governance, sovereignty and communication are still ongoing and many questions still remain unanswered or unconsidered. The Internet is subject to diverse developments and has many challenges in store for the law.

The Internet Governance Forum

With the *United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security* (GGE) and *Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers* (ICANN) there are formally established institutions consisting of UN Member States that deal with global issues of the Internet – primarily with issues of cyber security.

But there are also private actors like the *Internet Engineering Task Force* (IETF) and the *World Wide Web Consortium* (W3C) that still form and provide the logical infrastructure of the Internet. The [Internet Governance Forum](#) (IGF) that was established at the *International Telecommunication Union's* (ITU) *World Summit on Information Society* (WSIS) fourteen years ago which will take place again this week in Berlin, serves a different purpose. It allows different organizations ranging from civil society, expert groups and individuals from the fields of science, technology, business, and politics including ministries to freely and openly exchange views on how the rules of the Internet should look like. It operates on the basis of the belief that only through participation the Internet can truly serve the global common interest.

Right now, the IGF is at a turning point. Critics, who forced a review of the IGF by the High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation in 2020, want to change the function and role of the IGF. Among other things, they ask for a more effective institution that contributes directly to policy and norm development. This view neglects the fact that the IGF was consciously designed to do exactly the opposite. And that the strength of the IGF lies in the fact that it is an independent, informal open forum for the exchange of ideas.

Joint Symposium of *Völkerrechtsblog* and *JuWiss-Blog*

In a Symposium together with the *JuWiss-Blog*, *Völkerrechtsblog* will contribute to emphasize the strengths of the IGF, which are to promote the discussions and the open exchange of points of views and opinions. Challenges and possibilities have not only changed because of the Internet but have also become more diverse and complex. The symposium will touch on some of the manifold issues that arise in this context.

On *Völkerrechtsblog* [Amélie Heldt](#) discusses Hate Speech as a global challenge, [Giovanni de Gregorio](#) will address 'Free speech in the age of online content Moderation' and [Jonathan Zittrain](#) will take us on a journey through the three eras of digital governance. In his 'Tale of two foundational orders' [Matthias Kettemann](#) will tell us why it is essential to understand both international law and Internet governance in order to understand the Internet, and [Dennis Redeker](#) will introduce his thoughts on a 'Contract for the web'.

In the past the *Völkerrechtsblog* has published still relevant articles about the Right to Internet, which is [rooted](#) in public international law and [can be enforced](#) as part of the constitutional Right to Participate which [applies](#) equally to asylum seekers and refugees. We had a [vivid discussion](#) between [Matthias C. Kettemann](#) und [Michael Rieger](#) on five hypotheses on the future of international law on the Internet.

On the *JuWiss-Blog*, [Friedrich Schmitt](#) will take a closer look at the state freedom of opinion formation especially in the context of changed governmental public relations. [Quirin Weinzierl](#) joins our symposium with an blogpost on "Law through procedures – the far too little-noticed importance of procedures in Internet governance". [Keno C. Potthast](#) will shed light on political microtargeting from a communication science and jurisprudential perspective. [Matthias K. Klatt](#) will discuss whether German constitutional law, in particular the rule of law principle (Rechtsstaatsprinzip), imposes an obligation on the state to ensure adequate cyber security of its institutions.

On a side note

We are looking forward to a discussion inspired by the various blog posts. In the spirit of the open exchange of points of views and opinions that the IGF promotes we also would also like to draw attention to the event '[Many Worlds. Many Nets. Many Visions](#)' hosted by the Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society (HIIG) on 26 November 2019, challenging this year's IGF slogan. This event will also be an opportunity to meet some of the contributing authors.

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